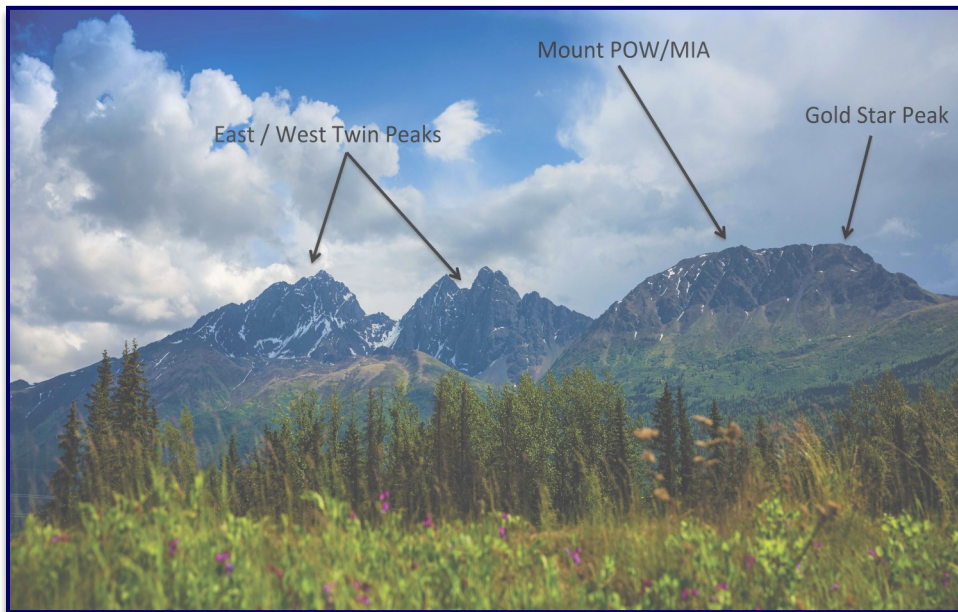




# United States Board on Geographic Names

*Standardizing Geographic Names for  
the Federal Government for 128 Years*



Gold Star Peak, Alaska, at far right, was a name approved by the BGN in February 2018.

**Fiscal Year 2018  
Annual Report to the  
Secretary of the Interior  
Washington, DC**



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## Mission Statement and Introduction

The United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) approves and standardizes geographic names for the Federal Government. BGN decisions establish uniform usage of names for toponymic features in domestic, foreign, Antarctic, and undersea regions.

The BGN is an interagency body with members from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, the Interior, and State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Government Publishing Office, the Library of Congress, and the Postal Service.

By working conjointly with the Secretary of the Interior (SOI), the BGN reduces duplication of work, personnel, and authority among its member agencies to foster clear and unambiguous communication within the Federal Government.

The BGN is a model of international coordination and cooperation with country names authorities, State names authorities, Tribes, and local communities, as well as with international bodies that promote geographic names standardization.



## Domestic Names Committee

The Domestic Names Committee (DNC) standardizes the names of geographic features within the United States and its sovereign areas. In FY18, the Executive Secretary for Domestic Names was Mr. Lou Yost (U.S. Geological Survey) and the Chair of the DNC was Mr. Andrew H. Flora (Department of Commerce/Bureau of the Census). The DNC receives research and database support from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

### *Actions*

The DNC met 10 times in FY18. The June meeting took place during the annual meeting of the Council of Geographic Names Authorities (COGNA), which was held at the University of Washington in Tacoma, Washington, and hosted by the Washington Board on Geographic Names.

The DNC's four Quarterly Review Lists comprised 174 new name and name-change proposals. In FY18, the DNC considered 176 proposals, of which 141 new names and changes were approved, and 35 were disapproved.

DNC staff continues to respond to inquiries from State names authorities, the news media, and Tribal, State, and local officials.

### *Activities*

The DNC's revised Principles, Policies, and Procedures has been in effect since December 2016. The staff has undertaken efforts to fully implement Policy X: Tribal Geographic Names, and the Secretariat notified the 573 federally recognized Tribes and approximately 175 Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) when each new Quarterly Review List was available online for review and comment.

### *Database of the Domestic Names Committee*

The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) is the official database for federally approved domestic names. GNIS staff is in the process of collecting polygons for ridges, ranges, summits, and valleys, and continues to process data updates from various Federal agencies.

As a result of migration by USGS to the Drupal web content management platform, all websites hosted by USGS are being redesigned. This redesign will affect the appearance of the BGN web pages and will require a change to the BGN's URLs.

To begin a feature search in the GNIS database of the USGS, please visit <https://usgs.gov/geonames/domestic-names>.



## Foreign Names Committee

The Foreign Names Committee (FNC) standardizes names for geographic features located outside the United States and its sovereign areas, as well as the names of oceans and seas. Mr. Trent Palmer (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency) served as Executive Secretary for Foreign Names during FY18. The Chair of the FNC was Mr. Leo I. Dillon (Department of State). FNC receives research and database support from the staff of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA).

### *Actions*

The FNC met four times in FY18 and considered and approved 28 staff recommendations. The Foreign Names staff at NGA developed, and the FNC approved, 12 country policies. Country policies are reference documents that comprehensively address the linguistic and political situations affecting place name collection in a specific country. For FY18, policies for the following countries were approved: Andorra, Armenia, Finland, Jordan, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue (New Zealand), Norway, Qatar, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, and Yemen.

### *Activities*

The BGN Chair and Vice Chair joined four members of the FNC Staff, the Executive Secretary for Foreign Names, and a deputy member from the Department of State in participating in the 32nd BGN/UK Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) Conference held in March in London.

The Executive Secretary for Foreign Names participated in the Eighth session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in August in New York City and represented the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) Bureau.

The Application of Variant Names Policy was approved, which prohibits the use of a parenthetical variant name in association with the name of an independent state (PCLI) or a high seas water body.

### *Database of the Foreign Names Committee*

The NGA GEOnet Names Server (GNS), hosted on the NGA website, is the single source for federally approved foreign names. At the end of FY18, it contained 12.8 million names associated with 7.8 million features. In FY18, 351,000 new names and 175,000 new features were added. FNC meeting minutes are now posted on the GEOnet Names Server.

To begin a feature search in the GNS database of the NGA, visit <https://usgs.gov/geonames/foreign-names>.



## Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names

The Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (ACAN) standardizes names for geographic features in Antarctica, an area with no permanent population and no officially recognized government. In FY18, Dr. Scott Borg (National Science Foundation) served as Chair and Mr. Roger L. Payne (USGS, retired) served as Secretary.

### *Actions*

ACAN meets on an as-needed basis, and met once in FY18. At the meeting, the committee recommended approval of 17 name proposals, which were approved by the BGN.

Mr. Manuel Castro and Mr. Robert Glover, representing NGA and USGS, respectively, were selected and approved to join ACAN. ACAN members are not required to be active Federal employees and may be subject matter experts from any organization. Membership to ACAN is contingent on approval by the BGN.



### *Activities*

The Polar Geospatial Center (PGC) at the University of Minnesota is developing software for use by the ACAN Secretary when processing proposals. PGC and ACAN are entering the testing mode for procedures developed by PGC to enhance geographic coordinates for features in Antarctica.

ACAN reports, sadly, that Peter “Pete” Bermel passed away October 21, 2017. Pete had represented USGS on ACAN for decades and served a term as President of the Antarctica Society. He led two expeditions and was one of the few individuals with two major features in Antarctica named for him: Bermel Escarpment and Bermel Peninsula.

### *Database of the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names*

GNIS is the official database for federally approved Antarctic names.

To begin a feature search in the GNIS database of the USGS, visit <https://usgs.gov/geonames/antarctic-names>.



## Advisory Committee on Undersea Features

The Advisory Committee on Undersea Features (ACUF) standardizes geographic names for undersea features beyond the 12-nautical-mile limit of the territorial sea of all nations.

In FY18, Mr. Gerry Walter (NGA) served as the Chair. Mr. Jimmy Nerantzis (NGA) served as Secretary for approximately half of the year, and Mr. Trent Palmer (NGA) completed the year as Acting Secretary.

### *Actions*

ACUF meets on an as-needed basis and met twice in FY18 and agreed to 28 name proposals, which were recommended to the BGN and approved.

Locations of name proposals included 10 new feature names and one feature name adoption in the Gulf of Mexico; eight new feature names in the North Pacific Ocean; four new feature names, one feature name adoption, and two feature name changes in the Arctic Ocean; one new feature name in the North Atlantic Ocean; and the adoption of one feature name in the North Pacific Ocean from a General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Gazetteer.

ACUF unanimously recommended Ms. Tara Wallace (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) as a new member, with approval by the BGN.

### *Activities*

The GEBCO Gazetteer site hosted by NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), formerly the National Geophysical Data Center, is once again operational and may be accessed at the following site: <https://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/gazetteer/>.

The 31st meeting of the International Hydrographic Organization/Inter-governmental Oceanographic Commission GEBCO Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) was held in October 2018 in Wellington, New Zealand. The BGN's Mr. Trent Palmer begins a five-year term as a member of SCUFN.

### *Database of the Advisory Committee on Undersea Features*

The NGA GEOnet Names Server (GNS), hosted on the NGA website, is the single source for federally approved undersea feature names.

To begin a feature search in the GNS database of the NGA, visit <https://usgs.gov/geonames/undersea-features>.



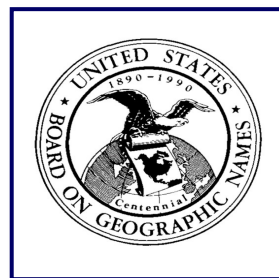
## Special Committee on Communications

The Special Committee on Communications (SCC) focuses on outreach initiatives specifically related to the BGN and geographic names. SCC membership is open to all BGN members serving on a BGN committee and is not subject to BGN Full Board approval.

Ms. Jacqueline Nolan (Library of Congress) served as the SCC Chair in FY18 and Ms. Brenda-Anne “B.C.” Forrest (Government Publishing Office) served as Vice Chair.

### Activities

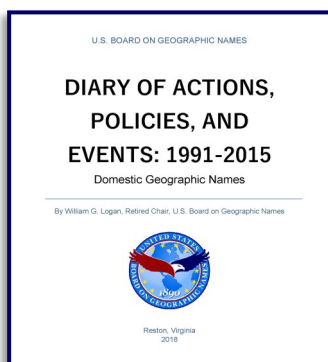
The SCC meets on an as-needed basis and met three times in FY18. DNC members consulted the SCC about creating a practical guide for the Implementation of Policy X: Tribal Geographic Names, of the Principles, Policies, and Procedures, and the guide is still under consideration.



During FY18, the SCC coordinated a transfer of BGN files that were previously stored at the Library of Congress and will now be permanently archived at USGS along with other BGN materials and resources.

In an effort to compile the events and activities of the SCC, the Chair consolidated the minutes from past SCC meetings into an electronic tracking and records-keeping document which the BGN staff will maintain.

Members from all of the BGN committees participated in the development of “Diary of Actions, Policies, and Events, 1991–2015” (see photo below).



This publication chronicles the DNC’s history from 1991 to 2015 and it will supplement Donald Orth’s original publication, “United States Board on Geographic Names, 1890–1990, 100 Years of Service, Diary of Actions, Policies, and Events: 1890–1990.”

Together, these historical documents highlight key decisions, policies, and events of the BGN. Based on DNC meeting minutes, the comprehensive DNC history is expected to be published in FY 2019.



## BGN Committees and Members

### Full Board

Chair: Leo I. Dillon  
 Department of State

Vice Chair: Tara Wallace  
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Executive Secretary for Domestic Names:  
 Lou Yost  
 U.S. Geological Survey

Executive Secretary for Foreign Names:  
 Trent Palmer  
 National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

### Executive Committee (Standing)

Chair: Tara Wallace  
 Vice Chair, BGN Full Board  
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### Members:

Leo I. Dillon  
 Chair, BGN Full Board  
 Chair, Foreign Names Committee  
 Department of State

Lou Yost  
 Executive Secretary for Domestic Names  
 U.S. Geological Survey

Trent Palmer  
 Executive Secretary for Foreign Names  
 National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Andrew H. Flora  
 Chair, Domestic Names Committee  
 Bureau of the Census

### Domestic Names Committee (Standing)

Chair: Andrew H. Flora  
 Bureau of the Census

Vice Chair: Jacqueline Nolan  
 Library of Congress

### Foreign Names Committee (Standing)

Chair: Leo I. Dillon  
 Department of State

### Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (Advisory)

Chair: Dr. Scott Borg  
 National Science Foundation

Secretary: Roger L. Payne  
 U.S. Geological Survey, retired

### Advisory Committee on Undersea Feature Names (Advisory)

Chair: Gerard J. Walter  
 National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Secretary: Jimmy Nerantzis  
 National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

### Representative to International Astronomical Union

Rose Hayward, Secretary  
 U.S. Geological Survey

### Special Committee on Communications

Chair: Jacqueline Nolan  
 Library of Congress

Vice Chair: Brenda-Anne C. Forrest  
 Government Publishing Office

### Department Members For October 2017–2019 Term

Department of Agriculture (Domestic Names)  
 Member: Emilee Blount  
 U.S. Forest Service

Central Intelligence Agency (Foreign Names)  
 Member: R. David Wert

Department of Commerce (Domestic Names and Foreign Names)  
 Member: Tara Wallace  
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Department of Defense (Domestic Names and Foreign Names)  
 Member: Marcus Allsup  
 National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Government Publishing Office (Domestic Names)  
 Member: Tony N. Gilbert

Department of Homeland Security (Domestic Names and Foreign Names)  
 Member: Eric Berman  
 Federal Emergency Management Agency

Department of the Interior (Domestic Names)  
 Member: Michael Tischler  
 U.S. Geological Survey

Library of Congress (Domestic Names and Foreign Names)  
 Member: Paulette Hasier

U.S. Postal Service (Domestic Names)  
 Member: Earl Johnson

Department of State (Foreign Names)  
 Member: Leo I. Dillon

For a complete list, please see <https://usgs.gov/geonames/membership>.



## The Full Board and BGN Resources

The Full Board of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names is composed of voting members from six Cabinet-level departments, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Government Publishing Office, the Library of Congress, and the Postal Service. In FY18, Mr. Leo I. Dillon (Department of State) served as Chair of the Full Board and Tara Wallace (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) served as Vice Chair. The BGN Full Board is scheduled to meet on a quarterly basis and met three times in FY18.

The Full Board of the BGN continues to serve our Nation by maintaining and promoting the standardization of geographic names in cooperation with international naming authorities, State names authorities, American Native entities, and local communities.

The BGN website, <https://usgs.gov/geonames/resources>, provides links for Domestic, Foreign, Antarctic, and Undersea Feature Names, as well as, a member directory, brochures, and fact sheets. Links to the Principles, Policies, and Procedures document, Quarterly Review Lists, meeting minutes, Frequently Asked Questions, the GNIS database, and the GNS database, are also featured.

Leo I. Dillon, Chair  
United States Board on Geographic Names

The BGN Annual Report was made possible by contributions from Leo I. Dillon (Department of State), Andrew Flora (Bureau of the Census), David de Hosson (NGA), Brenda-Anne C. Forrest (GPO), Tony N. Gilbert (GPO), Susan Lyon (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Maria McCormick (USGS), Jacqueline Nolan (Library of Congress), Matthew O'Donnell (USGS), Trent Palmer (NGA), Roger Payne (USGS, retired), Jennifer Runyon (USGS), Mike Shelton (National Park Service), Tara Wallace (NOAA), and Lou Yost (USGS).

BGN Annual Report design by Brenda-Anne "B.C." Forrest (GPO).

Cover Photography Credit: Gold Star Peak by First Sergeant Kirk Alkire, U.S. Army, retired.